

OCCUPANT PROTECTION

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SEAT BELTS

California competes with four states in the nation to hold at or above 95 percent seat belt compliance. While the combined estimated 2007 populations of Hawaii, Oregon and Washington (the competing states) is 11.3 million, they do not compare to California's population of 36.5 million. California's 2008 rate is 95.7 percent (August 2008), this represents 34.9 million persons wearing seat belts. However, the fact remains that 1,569,000 Californians are not utilizing restraint systems, and are therefore, at higher risk for death or injury, if involved in a collision. California conducted its fourth teen statewide seat belt observational survey. The 2007 survey teen seat belt use rate is 88.9 percent, down from 90.8 percent in 2006. While the teen seat belt compliance rate has increased 2.3 percentage points since the first survey in 2004 with a rate of 86.6, more efforts need to be focused on that population.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) 2007 Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) provisional data reports 67.1 percent of vehicle occupants killed in automobile collisions were using seat belts. In the last five years (2003 to 2007), the percentage of occupants killed in automobile collisions and using safety belts increased by 13.4 percentage points from 53.7 percent to 67.5 percent.

Persons considered "high-risk," (e.g., teens, non-English speakers, and those in the lower socioeconomic classes) remain involved in a disproportionate number of fatal and injury collisions. The rich diversity that typifies many communities in California contributes to the vitality and strength of the state as a whole. At the same time, it presents a number of challenges for health departments, law enforcement, and community based organizations committed to addressing occupant protection. This high-risk group requires special education and programs targeting cultural and language barriers. In California, we continue to see an increase in ethnic and linguistic groups. According to the new projections by the California's Department of Finance Demographics Unit, the Hispanic populations will constitute the majority of California by 2042. By the middle of the century, the projections indicate that Hispanics will represent 52 percent of the state's population, with Caucasians comprising 26 percent, the Asian population at 13 percent; the African American population at five percent, and Multiracial persons two percent. Both American Indian and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander groups will each make up less than one percent of the state by 2050. Media campaigns will target teens, Spanish, and non-English speaking populations. In addition, health departments will utilize networks and relationships with ethnic communities to address traffic safety issues for the populations they represent.

In order to focus on the teen population, high schools are conducting High School Seat Belt Challenges to raise awareness and promote safety belt use through good-natured, student run competitions. OTS is funding the CHP to administer mini-grants to high schools, whereby high schools challenge other schools within a school district to compete against each other to determine which school has the highest safety belt usage, which school can demonstrate the most improved safety belt usage rate and which school ran the best overall awareness campaign for safety belt usage. The competition takes place over a two-week period with designated students, or student coordinators, taking on the majority of the responsibility for running the program. The challenge involves two unannounced

observations of student safety belt usage as they enter campus to determine a percentage of students wearing their safety belts. The first survey is conducted before the beginning of the awareness campaign. The second observation is conducted towards the end of the awareness campaign. The results of the observations indicate the effectiveness of the safety belt awareness challenge. Awareness campaigns include activities such as school assemblies, development and dissemination of promotional materials such as posters, flyers and newsletters, among other things. As an added component to the teen statewide seat belt observational survey, schools that participate in High School Seat Belt Challenges are also used as school sites for the teen statewide observational study. They will be evaluated separately to determine effectiveness of their educational programs.

Through a partnership with the Traffic Safety Center at the University of California Berkeley, OTS will fund the "Next Generation -- Click It or Ticket" campaign by conducting two well-publicized seat belt enforcement mobilizations in November 17-30, 2008 and May 13-31, 2009. To promote sustained enforcement, law enforcement agencies (CHP and local law enforcement) serving at least 50 percent of California's population or serving geographic subdivisions that account for at least 50 percent of California's unbelted fatal vehicle occupants will carry out one to four days and/or nights of intensified seat belt enforcement each month. The goal of the "Next Generation -- Click It or Ticket" campaign is to increase seat belt use statewide to 96 percent by December 31, 2009. OTS will fund 3 million dollars to law enforcement agencies to offset overtime and reporting costs for the campaigns.

Traffic fines for failing to use seat belts and child safety remain at a maximum of \$89 for a first offense and \$191 for a second offense for adult violations (16 years and older) and \$340 for a first offense and \$871 for a second offense for child violations.

CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY (CPS)

California's child safety seat use rate is 94.4 percent (August 2008). Child passenger safety remains a difficult topic to master because of the constant technical changes in laws and regulations, and development of new products. California's focus is to increase the child passenger safety compliance rate. Programs will train NHTSA Child Passenger Safety technicians and instructors, but most of all, conduct child passenger safety restraint checkups, create fitting stations and conduct educational presentations.

National research on the effectiveness of child safety seats has found them to reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants (less than one year old) and by 54 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old) in passenger cars. For infants and toddlers in light trucks, the corresponding reductions are 58 percent and 59 percent, respectively (National Center For Statistics and Analysis – Lives Saved Calculations for Infants and Toddlers, March 2005).

II. ACTION PLANS

California's population continues to increase, with a growth of 1.17 percent, representing over 438,000 new residents in California (California Department of Finances 2007 Demographic Report.) The Office of Traffic Safety continues much needed funding to keep up with the new population totals, provide an ongoing effective occupant protection program that assures the public is educated and motivated to use seat belts and child safety seats on every ride. A combination of legislative mandates, enforcement, public information campaigns, education, and incentives are necessary to achieve significant, lasting increases in occupant restraint usage.

The purpose of the 405 incentive grant program is to reinforce key elements of a strategy to encourage states to enact and strengthen occupant protection laws and provide for the enforcement efforts related to the laws. The program will provide for NHTSA's Standardized Child Passenger Safety Training, the certification and re-certification program for the technician and instructor level candidates, and provide for child passenger safety seat check ups and fitting stations. The California Department of Public Health (DPH) provides assistance to The California Office of Traffic Safety with the statewide coordination of child passenger safety efforts in California. Through the Vehicle Occupant Safety Program, DPH staff assists local agencies by providing technician training and resources to counties and regions in need.

III. TASKS

TASK 1 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION

This task provides for the necessary staff time and expenses incurred by OTS that are directly related to the planning, development, coordination, monitoring, auditing, and evaluation of grants within this program area, and the preparation of the 2009 Highway Safety Plan. Funding is also provided in this task for the printing of brochures and pamphlets, distributing literature and media materials developed through successful grants, or obtained from other sources. Assistance is also provided under this task to individuals to attend and participate in technology transfer workshops, training sessions, or educational meetings or conferences.

TASK 2 - COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY OCCUPANT PROTECTION GRANTS

These grants conducted by county health departments include activities with schools, churches, medical facilities, law enforcement, courts, media, civic groups, large and small businesses, governmental agencies, etc. These grants develop child safety seat programs that educate and train on the correct use of safety belts and child safety seats. Activities include: conducting media events, public information campaigns, child safety seat check ups, child safety seat and seat belt surveys, educational presentations, providing NHTSA Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician training; court diversion classes; disseminating educational literature; distributing low cost or no cost child safety seats to low income families; and serving as fitting stations.

Grant #	Fund	Agency	FFY 2009 Funds
OP0803	402	Los Angeles	\$711,096
OP0804	402	Glendora	\$117,977
OP0805	402	Riverside County	\$165,246
OP0806	402	Solano County	\$133,084
OP0808	402	Long Beach	\$184,044
OP0809	402	San Francisco County	\$217,438
OP0901	402	Butte County	\$97,839
OP0906	402	Santa Clara County	\$164,413

TASK 3 - ENFORCEMENT AND EDUCATION OCCUPANT PROTECTION GRANTS

These grants conducted by law enforcement and fire personnel include enforcement and education to increase the use of safety belts and child safety seats. Activities include: conducting media events, public information campaigns, child safety seat checkups, child safety seat and seat belt surveys, educational presentations; disseminating educational literature; providing NHTSA Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician training; distributing low cost or no cost child safety seats to low income families.

Grant #	Fund	Agency	FFY 2009 Funds
OP0802	402	Rancho Cordova	\$153,685
OP0902	405	Modesto	\$139,761

TASK 4 - STATEWIDE USAGE SURVEYS

402

OP0801 - CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

STATEWIDE SEAT BELT, CHILD SAFETY SEAT, AND TEEN SEAT BELT USE SURVEYS

Estimates of seat belt usage rates of vehicle occupants on state and local roads and facilities are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of NHTSA funded occupant safety programs. Six surveys are planned. Four summer and spring surveys will estimate seat restraint usage rates of front seat occupants (and infant/toddlers in any vehicle position) on non-highway and highway roads. Pre- and post-test will be run on subsets of survey data collected in the spring and summer. Two fall surveys of 100 high school sites will be collected to estimate seat belt usage rates for high school drivers and passengers at high school campus parking lots. (\$211,112)

TASK 5 - STATEWIDE CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY TRAINING

402

OP0905 – DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH VEHICLE OCCUPANT SAFETY PROGRAM (VOSP)

VOSP will provide statewide coordination, working with its many State and local partners, to promote best practices in child passenger safety and youth occupant protection to reduce crash-related injuries for all children between birth and age 16. Objectives are twofold: 1) to refine the Technician Training System by increasing opportunities to reach out to instructors and over 2,000 technicians with technical information and resources; and 2) to strengthen local public health department capacity through individualized technical assistance, Network in-service teleconferences, and system building (e.g., working with Judicial Council to improve involvement of courts). (\$349,581)

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OP0704 - CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL STATEWIDE HIGHWAY RESTRAINT ENFORCEMENT CAMPAIGN (SHREC)

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) will implement community outreach and enforcement measures statewide that are designed to increase seat belt usage for all as well as to increase the proper use of child passenger restraint systems (CPRS) for children at or below the age of six. The grant goals are to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries in collisions in which victims were not using safety equipment. Objectives support the goals by providing statewide CPRS checkups, distributing child safety seats, and conducting public awareness presentations, where educational items are to be distributed. (\$0)

OP0904 – California Highway Patrol Statewide Highway Restraint Enforcement Campaign (SHREC) II

The grant enables the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to implement community outreach and enforcement measures statewide and are designed to increase seat belt usage for all ages as well as to increase the proper use of child passenger restraint systems (CPRS) for children at or below the age of six. The project goals are to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries in collisions in which victims were not using safety equipment. Objectives support the goals by providing statewide CPRS checkups, distributing child safety seats, and conducting public awareness presentations, where educational and promotional items are to be distributed. The project provides CPRS certification training to increase the number of staff authorized to perform child safety seat inspections at CHP Child Safety Seat Fitting Stations. This grant will also provide for the CHP Napa Area to conduct a focused program on its geographical area. (\$1,000,000)

TASK 6 – INNOVATIVE GRANTS TO INCREASE SEAT BELT USE

This task includes a public information and education campaign, enforcement activities, mini grants for agencies, and personnel to coordinate those efforts.

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OP0612 - CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

STATEWIDE "HIGH SCHOOL SEATBELT CHALLENGE" PROGRAM

Through the combined efforts of the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), local law enforcement, and high schools throughout the state. The CHP will provide mini-grants to high schools throughout the state to administer the challenge. Additionally, the CHP will conduct enforcement campaigns in areas near high schools, four weeks in duration, with the public awareness outreach element conducted continuously throughout the academic year, and the enforcement element conducted for two weeks during each of the four-week media campaigns. (\$1,229,374)

TASK 7 - MINI-GRANTS TO INCREASE SEAT BELT USE

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OP0903 - UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

STATEWIDE "CLICK IT OR TICKET" MINI GRANT PROGRAM

An important element in reducing injury in traffic collisions is the use of passenger restraint devices by all persons riding in a motor vehicle. Consequently, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration requires every state to conduct an annual survey to establish the state's seat belt use rate. Since 2002, California has increased seat belt enforcement through the use of paid overtime to the California Highway Patrol and local law enforcement agencies during national mobilizations. Continued enforcement is necessary to encourage compliance with occupant restraint laws and to increase the state's seat belt use rate. The use rate rose to 94.3 percent in 2007, exceeding the target rate of 93.7 percent. California will conduct seatbelt enforcement campaigns during the May 2009 national mobilization and this year will add an additional mobilization in November 2008 as well as monthly and night-time enforcement activities. (\$3,331,920)